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There is finally a deal. The Democrats agreed to only spend the total budget amount that the president had asked for. That saves you nearly \$150 billion over the next 5 years (because the base for future increases is lower) which is enough to avoid the increases in the alternative minimum tax that many want to see. I feel particularly happy about this because this all really started with the letter I circulated last spring on which 147 members of Congress agreed to uphold the president's veto of any spending bill over his requested amount. Bills went to the president, he vetoed them and the vetoes were upheld which is why majority Democrats had to make a deal. That all worked out quite well.

But I still voted against the spending bill.

- First of all, I actually thought the president's spending number was too high also. We cannot continue to increase spending by, or in excess of, the growth in the economy or we will never get to a balanced budget.
- Secondly, the deal included \$11 billion in one-time new spending.
- Third, it has at least 8000 earmarks in it for nearly \$20 billion. Much of this is complete waste. That's actually more than last year in spite of the Democrat leadership's pledges to reform this process. It shows that the bipartisan earmark culture on Capitol Hill is alive and well.
- Fourth, the bill was 3500 pages long and weighs nearly 35 pounds. We got it at midnight on Sunday night and the first votes in rules committee happened about 14 hours later. Nobody, except the people who wrote it, really knows what is in it. I'm sure there's a lot of bad stuff. It should not happen like this.
- Fifth, there is a bunch of bad stuff I *know* is in there. Congressman Jefferson (D-LA), who is under indictment for taking bribes (allegedly money hidden in his freezer) for earmarks, received an earmark which is one of many hundreds thrown in the bill without any discussion or hearing. There is \$10 million in there to pay for the legal defense of illegal aliens who are resisting deportation. And, the bill provides some funds for the border fence but reduces it from an ineffective one layer fence instead of two and does not provide the means to patrol it.

We saved some money. But there's a lot more left to be saved.